GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:2493
ANSWERED ON:16.12.2008
IMPACT OF GM FOODS
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Will the Minister of SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) the details of the regulatory mechanism for biosafety and field trials of genetically modified (GM) products in the country;

(b) whether the scientific community and agriculturists are demanding regulation on field trials and unregulated release of GM food items in the Indian environment;

(c) if so, the details thereof and the reaction of the Government thereto;

(d) whether Supreme Court has given an interim direction to the Government recently to publish all results of field trials on GM food items in the country;

(e) if so, the details thereof and the action taken by the Government in this regard;

(f) whether any study has been made to assess the impact of GM food items on public health and environment;

(g) if so, the details thereof;

(h) whether several countries have banned GM versions of crops to ensure food security; and

(i) if so, the reasons for production of GM rice when India is one of the largest rice producers in the world?

Answer

MINISTER OF SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY AND MINISTER OF EARTH SCIENCES(KAPIL SIBAL)

(a) The regulatory mechanism for biosafety and field trials of genetically modified (GM) products in the country fall within the purview of Rules-1989 of the Environment (Protection) Act-1986.The details of these rules and the Act are available on the website of the Ministry of Environment & Forests i.e. www.envfor.nic.in.

(b)&(c) All the field trials of GM crops are regulated under the Rules-1989 of the Environment(Protection) Act-1986 and there is no unregulated release of GM food in the country.

(d)&(e) The Hon'ble Supreme Court did direct the Government to publish all the biosafety data on the website and the details of all field trials, data on toxicity and allergenicity of commercialized GM crop i.e. Bt cotton with details of the zone, village and farmer conducting the field trials have been put on the website viz. www.igmoris.nic.in. The safety data generated on the Bt brinjal has been published on the website of Ministry of Environment & Forests i.e. www.envfor.nic.in.

(f)&(g) To assess the impact of GM foods on the public health, the procedure followed globally is to ensure substantial equivalence of GM food to its non-GM counterpart before its release.As far as impact on the environment is concerned, it is taken care during the field trials.

(h) For the purpose of food security, no country has banned GM version of crops anywhere in the world.

(i) So far production of GM rice in India has not been permitted. Only the biosafety research level-1 trials (BRL-1) have been permitted to the applicants to assess various biosafety parameters of GM rice.